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GROWTH Papers

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence – What it means for you and your organisation’s success

If location, location, location is the key to real estate success, then surely Relationships, Relationships, Relationships is the key to organisational success. Moreover, think of any great leader who is sustaining genuine success with their people and you will see that at the heart of their leadership is someone who works on their own and others’ emotional intelligence to create those successful relationships. As Michael Fullan (2001) states, “*There is no greater skill needed for sustainable improvement.*”

This paper outlines briefly what Emotional Intelligence or “EI” is, describes why it has become such a popular concept and highlights three of the most critical emotional competencies required for success in the workplace. It then provides a practical plan for building your own Emotional Intelligence and the EI capital amongst others in your workplace.

What is all the fuss about?

Emotional Intelligence is the foundation of the most constructive forms of leadership that have been identified. According to renowned psychologist Daniel Goleman a high Emotional Quotient (EQ) is consistently a better indicator of success than a high Intellectual Quotient (IQ).

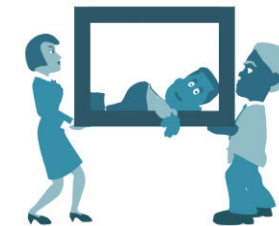
But what is all the fuss about? Surely Emotional Intelligence is simply another management fad? Interestingly, this “fad”, popularised a decade ago, seems to be attracting ever increasing interest. With a growing emphasis on soft skills where organisations are measuring success other than mere bottom-line results, how we manage ourselves & others has become critical.

How do people in your organisation respond to ever increasing demands to change? How do they manage their frustrations, anxiety and even anger? Do your sales people possess unique abilities to build long-term trusting relationships with their clients? Do the teachers in your school empathise with individual challenges associated with their students and manage their learning accordingly? Are the leaders in your organisation highly motivated, despite frustrating resource allocations and additional pressures placed upon them? In addition, do they have the ability to motivate their teams to higher levels of engagement? The key to managing these challenges lies in effectively managing emotions or Emotional Intelligence.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

There has been an explosion of research in the past 10-15 years on elements that predict individual and team success. Whether you consider entry level workers or senior leaders, specific technical skills or knowledge are proving less critical than that the two areas that form the bedrock of all Emotional Intelligence competencies:

1. **Personal competence** (the underlying ability to know and manage one's internal state, including competencies of self awareness, self control, self confidence, conscientiousness, optimism & adaptability) and
2. **Social competence** (the ability to manage others effectively including competencies associated with motivating, empathising, influencing, communicating, developing others and leading)



What are the most critical EI competencies?

As you can see, there are numerous competencies associated with being emotionally intelligent. Here are three areas that we have identified as particularly relevant to workplace success.

These may prove good starting points for building EI effectiveness and general performance in your workplace:

1. Being self aware

Do not assume that your own Emotional Intelligence needs no further development. No matter how effective or busy we are, we need to take time out for regular reflection and to seek feedback. If we are motivated to improve our effectiveness and satisfaction levels, we need to understand that our behaviours are closely linked to long held habits. At a neurological level, we need to work on both stopping old habits that no longer serve us well and creating new responses.

When we take time to be more self aware we are less inclined to be victims of what psychologists describe as “amygdala hijacks”. The amygdala, or the brain’s memory bank, can hijack our way of thinking if we allow stress to build up. Increasing our self awareness helps us to become better able to short-circuit the hijack before we find ourselves out of control.

For instance, when multiple demands are being placed on you simultaneously, are you aware of the impact those pressures are having on you in the moment and then do you take action to manage those accordingly? Or do you continue to soldier on frantically and wonder why you have developed a headache or even a short fuse with others? When you become angry or disappointed, do you allow your amygdala hijack to last for ten

minutes or 10 days before you “build the bridge and get over it?”

2. Empathising

Empathising allows us to help others to manage their “amygdala hijacks”. By sensing what others feel – perhaps they tell us by tone of voice or facial expressions – we are able to build our social radar. Not only do we read their emotions but we sense and respond to their unspoken thoughts and feelings, allowing us to understand the issue that lies behind their feelings, thereby building the basis of a successful relationship. Goleman refers to it at the deepest level as an intimate emotional tango!

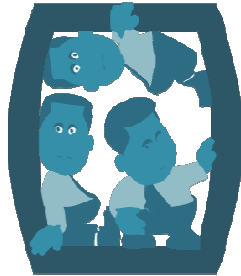
For example, when someone confronts you with challenging feedback on your behaviour do you instantly become defensive or do you seek to understand their point of view first?

3. Initiating and managing change

Our openness, readiness and adaptability to change are central to personal growth. Our ability to initiate change and influence others in a positive way is central to us supporting the growth of others.

What emotions take over when you find yourself in a changing situation or, worse, a crisis? Maybe the goal posts have suddenly changed at work? Perhaps your entire value system is being compromised? What if you have unexpectedly been

retrenched? What if you are being asked to retrench half of your team? We know that change is inevitable and constant. Do we fight it every step of the way? Are we ruled by fear or do we simply feel overwhelmed and find ourselves in “paralysis by analysis” mode?



We have noticed that the most outstanding leaders with whom we work embrace change in a positive and constructive manner. That is not to say they glibly accept all change but rather they are open to new information, have a strong sense of what is important and allow their values & openness to guide them to effective decision making. Typically, they are willing to let go of old assumptions that no longer seem right, are open to a degree of risk taking and can adapt quickly. Also, they have the emotional strength to support, inspire and influence others through the change process.

How can you assist others to build their Emotional Intelligence?

No matter how insensitive, shy, hot-headed or disorganised people in your workplace are, emotional literacy can be cultivated. The most important thing to remember is that genuine change requires the rewiring of ingrained habits. This

will not be achieved in a few hours or even days. Successful change can occur however within months if the right learning strategies are applied. Do not be tempted to use the “spray and pray” approach where you expose everyone to a couple of days’ training and hope it sticks!

There is a significant difference between how people learn say, a new computer software application versus how they build emotional competence such as greater self confidence or enhanced flexibility. The latter types of learning draw on different parts of the brain. Social and emotional competencies involve mainly the circuitry that runs from the emotional centres – particularly the amygdala which is deep in the centre of the brain. These circuits have to be re-tuned in order to achieve emotional learning which involve ways of thinking and behaving that are more central to a person’s core identity and values.

The effective building of emotional intelligence that contributes to sustainable change and growth of individuals, teams and your organisation as a whole requires an **integrated and synergistic approach to learning**. To make this approach accessible to all, we have designed a process which has been successfully applied with a range of organisations in a way that ties in with our **eight step GROWTH coaching model**. The focus is of course on action learning where participants are supported to continuously link their learning to real life situations.

Below you will find our recommended steps summarised in a table. Following that table is a typical account of one person’s learning journey towards greater emotional intelligence which ultimately impacted significantly on bottom line results AND job motivation levels.

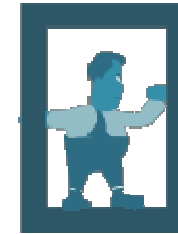
<p><i>Step 1</i> Build trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure a positive, trusting relationship is established between the trainer, facilitator or team leader who is implementing the EI program. (Trainers who are empathic, warm and genuine are more likely to facilitate successful change.) - Establish a culture that demonstrates the organisation’s commitment to EI development e.g. senior managers take part in EI program first or <u>with</u> their direct reports - Share research that demonstrates the impact of enhanced EI on bottom line results & staff satisfaction - Encourage self disclosure of personal motivators, barriers and setbacks
<p><i>Step 2</i> Set Goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess organisational needs and the specific EI competencies that are most critical to success - Build learners’ motivation prior to the change process, for example develop personal mission statement for the ideal self <p>Maximise self directed change that focuses on supporting individuals to decide on EI competencies & goals to work on</p>

<p><i>Step 3</i> Examine current Reality and Readiness for change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build awareness of what’s working and not working in terms of the ideal self - Individual reflects on strengths and weaknesses against ideal self - Individual gains feedback from others – strengths and deficit areas – through a range of feedback processes including 360° feedback - Gauge readiness for change (in preparation for selecting options in the next step)
<p><i>Step 4</i> Explore Options for strategies that will support change</p>	<p>Options will be based on the person’s readiness for change and specific learning needs. No single approach will work with every individual but options may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training & set reading about EI competencies - Experiential methods – active, concrete learning methods including, role plays, discussions, simulations, videotaping - Apply new competencies on the job e.g. build the application of them into projects & link many into social interaction - Help learners to analyse and emulate respected role models

<p><i>Steps 5 &6</i></p> <p>Individuals select the actions they Will pursue and the Tactics (When? How?) to make them happen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Break goals into manageable steps - Maximise opportunities to practice - Buddy individuals up to support implementation - Explore time management issues to ensure time is set aside for practice
<p><i>Step 7</i></p> <p>Establish support structures that will promote sustained new Habits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance insight that builds on self awareness e.g. build in structured reflection time with a coach or colleague - Ensure ongoing & frequent feedback e.g. from manager, external coach, buddy &/or mentor - Implement follow up assessments e.g. 360° surveys - Prevent relapse – Prepare individuals for setbacks which are a normal part of the change process & assist them to proactively plan for managing those setbacks - Evaluate effectiveness of programs
<p><i>Step 8</i></p> <p>Celebrate the results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforce positive behaviour change e.g. manager gives positive feedback and praise - Link promotion and other incentives to desired behaviour changes

The Story of Mark

Mark appeared confident in front of his team and his customers – often too confident. His confidence erred on the side of arrogance in fact which was putting many people off working with him. Ironically, if anyone had ever cared to ask him, most often Mark felt insecure and ineffective and his outer confidence in no way matched his inner levels of confidence. His loud, over-bearing behaviour was a way for him to mask his quiet, uncomfortable insecurities.



Mark's organisation told him about an Emotional Intelligence program they were offering. Normally cynical about such programs, his ears pricked up when his boss mentioned that the building of confidence and staff satisfaction levels were key components of the program. He'd become more and more dissatisfied with his work lately as his confidence levels had continued to slip.

The program was commencing with a 2 day team learning session with an external provider. Mark was unusually impressed with the presenter who seemed **open, honest and didn't use much jargon**. She explained what this Emotional Intelligence stuff was about. Interestingly, she also shared

some research from a similar organisation to his where a comparable program had impacted very positively on staff confidence and satisfaction levels. In addition, they had become an Employer of Choice whilst achieving extraordinary growth in bottom line results.

The presenter asked them to privately reflect on their ideal self and to develop a **Personal Vision Statement** to describe that. She somehow made it a practical and doable task. She then guided them through a range of exercises that involved **giving and receiving feedback** on their strengths and gaps between their ideal self and their present self.

A **learning plan** was then developed in private with this presenter cum **coach** and, in consultation with her and with Mark's manager, they developed strategies that would allow him to **practice** what he needed to do in order to feel more confident yet appear less arrogant and defensive.

Mark's manager was surprisingly **supportive and empathic** to Mark's learning journey. He provided timely, honest yet **sensitive feedback** and was open and genuine in his **praise** of Mark as he observed the gradual changes in behaviour that were having a pleasingly positive impact on the wider team and on Mark's customers. Within only a few months, Mark was feeling more relaxed, positive and certainly more confident about the value of the role he was playing in the organisation. Moreover, he was enjoying the company of his colleagues to a

much greater extent now that he was seeing the impact of his previous behaviours and was able to **empathise** with what they had been forced to endure. The ultimate measure of his success came six months later when he was offered a promotion. He accepted it with enthusiasm and confidence.

Summary

A key point to remember in the development of Emotional Intelligence is that every relationship provides an opportunity to grow and learn emotionally. The learning must be experiential and based on individual as well as organisational needs if the program is to get traction. We can all take control of creating greater emotional literacy in our workplaces by working on ourselves first, empathising with others then recognising and acting upon the change opportunities.

If this is a "fad", then we predict it will have a long shelf life – as long as effective relationships in the workplace continue to be essential to success.

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